

The European Commission

Reflections regarding the mid-term evaluation for Erasmus+

Erasmus+ is the prime instrument for realizing the internationalisation strategy and policy set by the HEI. This paper focuses on the importance of Key Action 2: Cooperation for Innovation and the exchange of good practises, enhancing the cooperation between higher education institutions leading to institutional development and improved processes.

The actions within Erasmus+ are crucial for reaching the objectives of the HEI:

- The benefits include an increased capacity to operate at an international level, improved management methods, access to more funding opportunities and projects, increased ability to prepare, manage, and follow-up projects, as well as a more attractive portfolio of opportunities for students and staff.
- Capacity Building is a forceful action providing resources for clearly defined joint activities involving EU institutions and partner organizations outside EU/EES countries. This is a unique action which allows cooperation across borders, bringing into the consortium representatives from different regions and different cultures.
- EMJMD is the prime action for advanced curriculum development/ development of new high quality international master programmes.
- Strategic Partnership is a flexible and useful tool allowing a number of activities and therefore adaptable to any objective.
- ICM is an easy tool for further developing existing cooperation.
- Erasmus+ contributes to university brand promotion and promoting education in third world countries.

From the experience of coordinating or participating in Erasmus+ actions, it is found that some of the programme features counteract the scope set by the European Commission. As such, we foresee a change in the regulation for the next generation of Erasmus+

- The introduced financial framework puts the institutions situated outside big/central cities into a disadvantaged situation, which is against the “equal opportunities” policy declared by the EC. In order to participate in the activities, the regional universities have to contribute with their own resources in order to cover the costs for travel. As the universities in the partner countries in most cases cannot provide extra funding due to national legislation, the participants in the activities have to contribute with personal funds to cover the extra expenses.
- The current amount for travel costs is insufficient for countries especially in South and Latin America. Also the cost for travelling to/from other cities within the home and host country need to be considered, keeping in mind travels required to obtain visa. The location for the visa authority could sometimes be in another country.

- For actions involving student mobility within Capacity Building, the monthly allowance of €850 is too low for Sweden, and depending on the exchange rate it could also be below the required amount for allowing a residence permit for the mobility period. For the Key Action 2 programmes, this amount shall also cover costs for insurance and visa.
- The funding available for EMJMD is focused on mobility costs and participation costs (tuition fees required by the institution). There is no funding for development of the joint programme, which is crucial in order to maintain attractiveness.
- Involvement of scholars is a great asset for the EMJMDs. However, in order to attract experienced researchers renowned in their field, it is important to let the consortium decide on the reimbursement and the length of stay. For a short stay the reimbursement of travel costs and accommodation is often sufficient, whereas remuneration might be required for longer stays. The grant for scholars could be made as a supplementary proposal to the EMJMD.
- For EMJMD, mobility to a company is only eligible if the company is already an associated member of the consortium. This prevents the EMJMD to promote the final year project to be carried out in industry, which is common for engineering programmes. It is not known beforehand which company the student will select for her/his final year project and companies are also reluctant to sign associate partnership agreements for student mobility. To promote cooperation with industry for EMJMD's, we urge that there are no restrictions for mobility periods in companies provided that this is part of the EMJMD curricula.
- Clarity regarding use of E+ scholarships within degree awarding programmes is asked for.

Suggestions for improvements for the next generation of Erasmus+

- With respect to covering the costs of travel it would be feasible to return to reimbursement of the real costs or revise the unit costs to make them more realistic.
- Clear instructions to audit firms to audit the project on bases of the guidelines and rules in place at the time of the project implementation, not the ones currently in place at the time of the audit.
- The three years contracts for Joint Programmes should be extended to five years in order to boost and achieve sustainability, continuity and stability. The building of a smooth-running joint programme with international reputation takes more than three years. A preparatory investment should be awarded. Finally, the EC should allow for the continued use of the Brand Name of Erasmus Mundus for long-standing joint masters, as a token of their international standing and proven record of accomplishment in excellence.
- Provide a new sub-action for EMJMDs that have been running successfully by attracting self-funded students, allowing financial support for activities enhancing the joint character of these programmes. Examples could be funding for kick-off meetings, winter and summer schools, joint workshops and joint graduation ceremony.
- Triple the funding for the management costs of EMJMDs. The administrative cost for running a joint programme is three times as high as the administrative costs for a local programme.
- Reset the amount for monthly allowance for student mobility to €1000. The cost for insurance and visa should be added to the travel grant. Acknowledge that travel may be needed for the visa process – sometimes even to another country.
- Strategic Partnership should be centralized. The lump-sums allocated to the travel costs should be increased (or differentiated in terms of cost of living in the different countries) to avoid a concentration of activities to low-cost countries. The priorities should be set centrally since it does not make sense to have national priorities addressed by transnational consortia.

- For ICM - larger projects should be granted to each institution in each envelope instead of spreading the available budget for a higher institutional impact. Higher national budget. More even distribution of the budget among the envelopes.

Further we would like to stress the support actions needed to be in place at the EU Programme Office in order to support the successful achievements of the HEI's taking part in Erasmus+ projects

- From the very early stages of the new programme development, the EU Programme Office should check the proposed framework for the key requirements and communicate the opinions of the stakeholders back to the Commission.
- The present funding situation shows that the EC's team which worked on the development of the financial framework of the ERASMUS+ programme was very far from the real conditions and no consultations with the stakeholders had been carried out. One of the results was that a key issue – equal opportunities for all participants – has not been met.
- Transparency is asked for with regard to the selection of projects in a given call.
- Statistics on submitted projects should be presented shortly after the closing of the call for proposals.
- More accessibility for individual consulting on specific project proposals should be made available.

Likewise, the following support actions are needed to be in place at the National Agency:

- The National Agency shall insist on participation at all stages of the programme development and implementation and shall influence the decision-making process during the lifetime of a programme. It is important to keep in mind that Erasmus+ is a community funded programme and it must comply with all key requirements related to public funding.
- The National Agency should represent Swedish Higher Education's interest and clearly lobby the needs to the EU Programme Office.
- Bring to the attention of the national ministries when national legislation is in conflict with actions in the Erasmus+ programme.
- Transparency is asked for with regard to the selection of projects in a given call.
- Statistics on submitted projects should be presented shortly after the closing of the call for proposals.
- More accessibility for individual consulting on specific project proposals should be made available.
- There is a need to have a representation at EU level in order to voice the national priorities and requests in a more effective way.



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